

BAN THE PRODUCTION, USE AND SALE OF ASBESTOS NOW

Health, Environmental and Labour Organizations Call for Immediate Ban

Canada has been the world leader in the marketing and sale of a deadly substance whose impact on human health has been well-documented for more than 50 years: asbestos. It is time the Canadian government did the right thing, and banned the production, use and sale of asbestos immediately.

Why ban asbestos?

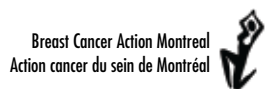
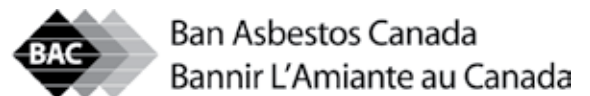
- **Asbestos causes cancer** – All forms of asbestos are known to be carcinogenic. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) recently reconfirmed that all commercial asbestos fibres, including chrysotile, cause lung cancer, mesothelioma, laryngeal and ovarian cancer.
- **Asbestos cannot be handled safely** – Independent scientific bodies and labour organizations around the world, including the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Trade Union Confederation and the Canadian Cancer Society, have called for chrysotile asbestos to be banned since it is a recognized carcinogen and there is no safe way it can be used.
- **There is no economic reason to support asbestos** – The chrysotile asbestos industry is dying in Quebec. Over 90% of the workers have been laid off; the remaining approximately 400 workers have had their wages slashed and work part-time.ⁱ The last functioning asbestos mine, LAB Chrysotile Inc., in Quebec, has recently filed for bankruptcy protection. On an encouraging note, a recent study shows impressive success by the asbestos-mining region of Quebec in diversifying its economy away from asbestos.
- **It's a waste of taxpayers' money** – Since the 1980s, the Chrysotile Institute (formerly the Asbestos Institute), a government and industry-funded group, has spent more than \$50 million of Canadian and Quebec taxpayers' money on campaigns abroad to promote the sale of chrysotile. Funding from these two governments in 2008 totalled \$1,350,000 over three years.ⁱⁱ
- **Taxpayers are paying twice** – The majority of workers who are suffering from asbestos-caused disease are not receiving the help they are entitled to from provincial compensation boards. This means that workers are abandoned, employers are not held accountable, and hundreds of millions of dollars of treatment costs – that should be covered by the corporate compensation insurance system – are instead paid by the public.
- **It's a lethal killer** – The WHO estimates that between five and ten million people will ultimately die from asbestos-related diseases.ⁱⁱⁱ In Canada, asbestos-related disease is the most significant contributor to occupational mortality.

Chrysotile asbestos has been banned by most industrialized countries. Yet Canada continues to promote its use among vulnerable workers in the developing world, while at the same time spending millions of dollars to remove asbestos from the Parliament Buildings.

As such, we believe that the Canadian government must without delay:

- stop funding the Chrysotile Institute
- introduce legislation to ban the use and export of asbestos
- create a national registry for asbestos disease
- provide just and adequate transition assistance to workers and communities involved in the asbestos industry
- ensure that fair compensation is provided to all people across Canada with asbestos-related disease
- take responsibility for harm caused by asbestos placed in houses on First Nations reserves and on army bases
- support the listing of chrysotile asbestos under the Rotterdam Convention

Endorsed by:



ⁱ Letter to Prime Minister Harper, January 23, 2009 from Dr Fernand Turcotte & Dr Pierre Auger, Université Laval, Faculté de Médecine. L'Actualité, « La Vie après l'amiante », June 1, 2009

ⁱⁱ La Tribune (Sherbrooke, Quebec), February 21, 2008. Canada News Wire, Press Release, Quebec Ministry of Natural Resources, March 17, 2008.

ⁱⁱⁱ World Health Organization, Occupational Health: Ethically Correct, Economically Sound. Fact Sheet Number 84